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Point of View

Thesis Statement

A 1930’s Male Sport

The past and the present, two factors that make up tomorrow. The society within these two different time periods has really evolved over time, much of which we really take an advantage of today. The more than one hundred year old sport of cheerleading is one of those activities that have really changed over the amount of time. Cheerleading is a sport that today involves mostly girls. Cheerleaders now days participate in competitions which involve building and a short routine. Also, you can watch these talented athletes cheering at different sporting events showing support for their team. I myself have been a cheerleader for ten year: four, being cheered for the Bellwood-Antis Blue Devils. I would like to explore the history of cheerleading in the 1930’s in greater detail to find out how everything was back then. I choose this topic because this is an activity that has been a part of my life for over half of it. This sport is tons of fun and a great way for me to make new friends. Also, I want to see how everything has changed and compare how it has come a long way.

Throughout the years, cheerleading has had more and more additions to bring it to where it is today. As for the beginning part of it all, the 1930’s really were the main contributors. According to Bellis, M (2009), cheerleading by definition is the organized cheering conducted at sports events. Surprisingly the first cheerleaders were not woman, which make up about 90% of today’s (Singer, L, 2007), but instead were males. In the 30’s, they were called yell leaders instead of cheerleaders. Back then, their uniforms often consisted of a sweater (usually a cardigan) with the school letters on the front, pants, and “bucks” which are like saddle shoes (*cheerleaderuniforms.info*, 2009/Bellis, M, 2009). Lastly, a manufacture of cheerleading uniforms, Art Knitting Mills, also specializes in varsity letter jackets, even for cheerleaders. The 1930’s was the start for when the letter appeared on the leathered sleeve of the wool jacket, marking the beginning of our jackets today.

Second, was when the megaphone began to be apart of the picture of cheerleading. According to Richard, C. A. (2009), in the 1930’s, the cheerleading megaphone became both part of both male and female cheering exercises as a tool used to entertain crowds. It was invented in the 1600’s by a scholar named Athanosius Kircher but not for cheering but rather to project images on darkened room walls. The cheerleading megaphones were first used by Priceton University. A megaphone (a device used to amplify the voices of the cheerleaders) would often accompany the cheerleading uniforms and they would have the school letters on them as well (Bean, K, 2009). This big step for the history of cheerleading came when the sport became to display more showmanship. This happened because the athletes became very entertaining which caught everyone’s attention. These 1930 yell leaders, to help heighten the excitement, began using this legendary device, noisemakers and even drums (*The History of Cheerleading | Cheerleading's Early History*, 2007).

The last great addition to 1930’s cheerleading would be the pom pom. No surprise that the pom poms used today are not the same as they were back seventy years ago. Just as the megaphone came into the picture, the pom pom, which was introducted by Lawrence Herkimer, really gave cheerleading a symbol to hang its hat on (Bean, K, 2009). These first pom poms were actually made out of paper. They saw this as a problem because when they would be used, they would fall apart leaving strands of them all over the ground. Also, they would not be able to use them in certain weather conditions because they would be destroyed. Today, we use the word pom pom but actually the offical name for them ends in an “n” such as pom pon. Pom poms back in the thirties were also handmade whereas today, they are vinyl and manufactured which came twenty years later. The only similarity now is that these decorative balls, which are just handheld streamers, are a visual prop for every cheerleader.

In conclusion, looking back through the past, some things really change and the some don’t. The sport of cheerleading over the years has really came a long way, from the uniforms all the way down to pom poms. After looking through the history of cheerleading in the 1930’s, I was successfully able to see the giant leap that our society has taken with this sport. The only problem was since I was researching something over seventy years ago, no specific dates were given with the main events. With cheerleading, I hope to finish out my senior year with being a BA cheerleader, my final year, and hopefully get to be one in college too. I was very satisfied with my findings because I was able to explore the history and how times used to be. Overall, cheerleading basics has not changed a bit. How these baics have evolved through time are drastic but are related to how they are today.